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On the Comparison of Adverbs in English in the Fourteenth Century

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LINCOLN NEBRASKA

IV.—*On the Comparison of Adverbs in English in the Fourteenth Century*

BY ALMA HOSIC

INTRODUCTION

The following investigation deals with the comparison of adverbs in English in the fourteenth century. This century seems especially important in the history of adverb comparison, since it represents the close of the dialectal period and the beginning of the transition period from Middle to Modern English. A chief purpose has been to connect the adverbial forms of the fourteenth century with those of the preceding and following centuries.

Examples are very full but not exhaustive. The majority of the important literary monuments of the century have been examined. The examples, however, are fuller for the Northern and Midland than for the Southern dialects. The great variety of forms for the comparative and superlative of adverbs is due to many conditions, a brief survey of which seems necessary for a complete understanding of these forms.

The two and a half centuries, following the close of the Old English period, in which there was no standard tongue was a period of marked growth for the English language. Forms, spellings, sounds, and meanings, which are constantly shifting in any living language, developed rapidly. By the close of the thirteenth century the dialects had become so intensely local that there was no English which could be understood both at Durham and at Exeter. The North, the first to level and drop inflectional endings, differed materially from the South, which was very conservative in this respect. Midland dialects, situated between the North and the South, show the influence of both.

The works of earlier English writers were translated into these various dialects, and in the beginning of the century the author of *Cursor Mundi*, Manning, and others, began to translate French into English. When we add the Scandinavian element of the North and the Latin element of the South to the Old English and the French forms, we have the linguistic elements of Middle English. Hence the literature of the early half of the fourteenth century is a veritable mine for the linguistic student. Nor is the development in the rest of the century less interesting.

A discussion of adverb comparison must necessarily include much concerning the comparison of adjectives. Many Old English adverbs are regularly formed by adding *-e* to monosyllabic adjectives or to adjectives ending in *lic*: *heard*, *hearde*, *suplic*, *suplice*. A few primary adverbs as *oft*, *oftor*, *oftost*, *ær*, *æror*, *ærost* are compared, but as a rule no adverbs admit of comparison except those derived from adjectives. The comparison of these secondary adverbs is very similar to, often identical with, that of adjectives.

The examples are arranged, as far as possible, both chronologically and according to inflectional endings.

The author wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to Dr. Louise Pound's "Comparison of Adjectives in the XV and the XVI Century," for the term, "terminational," and for some points in classification.

I. TERMINATIONAL COMPARISON

I. PRIMITIVE TEUTONIC AND OLD ENGLISH

Terminational comparison is characteristic of all Indo-European languages and hence appears in Primitive Teutonic. Gothic, which best exemplifies the oldest Teutonic forms, has two endings for the comparative and superlative of adjectives. The comparative degree is formed by adding *-iz-*, *-oz-*; the superlative, by adding *-ist-*, *-ost-* to the positive, as: *hardus*, *hardiza*, *hardists*; *arms*, *armoza*, *armosts*. The Gothic adverb developed a comparative form from the adjective comparative suffix *-iz-*.

An adverbial comparative in *-os* is rare.¹ Adverbs are not declined, and *-z* final becomes *-s*; hence the comparative ending in *-iz-*, *-oz-* of adjectives becomes *-is*, *-os*, in adverbs; *airiza*, *airis*; *hauhiza*, *hauhis*. Examples in *-os* are *sniumundos*, *aljalikos*. The superlative ending for adverbs is the same as for adjectives in *-ist-* without the case ending, *hauhist*.

Teutonic medial *-z-* becomes *-r-* in OE., and *-n* of inflectional endings is dropped through loss of accent. Hence **-izan*, **-ozan* of Prim. Teut. adjectives become OE. **-ira*, **-ora* which, by syncopation of the middle vowel,² become *-ra*, as: Goth. *hauhiza*, OE. *hiehra*, Goth. *hardoza*, OE. *heardra*, Goth. *swinþoza*, OE. *swipra*. The Teut. superlative forms **-ost-*, **-ist-* become OE. *-ost*, *-est*; *-ist* becoming *-est* in an unaccented syllable.

Although Gothic adverbial forms in *-is*, *-ist* are much more common than forms in *-os*, *-ost*, most of the OE. adverbs adopted the *-ora*, *-ost* endings of the adjective. But since there is no inflection of the adverb, hence no syncopation of the middle vowel, the comparative ends in *-or*; as *heard*, *heardra*, *heardost* for the adjective, and *heard*, *heardor*, *heardost* for the adverb.

Since final Prim. Teut. *-z* and unprotected *-i-* are lost in OE., adverbs, which in Gothic formed their comparison in *-is*, *-ist*, give OE. monosyllabic comparatives and superlatives in *-est* with umlaut of the radical vowel as: Gothic *laggo*, *laggis*, *laggist*, and OE. *lange*, *leng*, *lengest*. OE. has a few irregularly compared adverbs, as *lytel*, *micel*, *wel*, which show umlaut in comparative forms.

2. MIDDLE ENGLISH

Through analogy and a canceling of differences in inflection, when such inflection indicated no difference in use, there was a leveling of inflectional forms in Middle English and the terminational comparatives became invariable. Another result of this tendency to bring regularity out of irregularity was the weakening of vowels in inflectional endings. Unaccented *-a-*, *-o-*, *-u-*

¹ Braune. *Gotische Grammatik*, sec. 212.

² Sievers. *Angelsächsische Grammatik*, sec. 144.

became *-e-*. Owing to these changes, OE. adverbial *-or*, *-ost* became ME. *-er*, *-est*, monosyllabic comparatives took the ending *-er*, the positive form lost final *-e*, and the umlaut of OE. gradually disappeared, being kept in only a few irregular, isolated forms. Hence the Modern English adverbial forms for the terminational comparison were practically established by the middle of the fourteenth century. Chaucer wrote them as at present, with an occasional OE. comparative in *-re*.

In the fourteenth century the terminational was the prevailing mode of comparison. The comparison by *more* and *most* is not found in OE., but occurs first in the thirteenth century and does not become common until Chaucer's time.¹

The normal endings of the comparative and superlative are *-er*, *-est*. Variants for the comparative are: *-ar*, *-ir*, *-ur*, *-or*, *-our*, *-re*, and for the superlative, *-este*, *-ist*, *-es*. Of these the Northern *-ar* is the Norse form of the comparative ending, which Southern dialects spelled *-or*. All dialects furnish examples of OE. *-re*.

1. Comparatives:

-ar): *scnar*, R. H., I, 40, 29. *langar*, ib., I, 45, 20. *langare*, ib., II, 389, 44. *lengare*, ib., I, 210, 38. *clennar*, ib., I, 66, 39. *hardar*, Bruce, III, 599. *langar*, ib., I, 84. *nerar*, ib., V, 258.

-ir): *deppir*, R. H., I, 96, 13. *bettir*, Bruce, V, 735. *betir*, Ch. R. R., 791. *lengir*, Temp. G., 1271.

-ur): *heghur*, C. M., 2232. *traistur*, ib., 28998. *bettur*, Wycl., 28, 23.

-our): *hardiour*, P. P., I, 103. *grettour*, ib., CXXIII, 28. *biterour*, ib., XIII, 220. *sykerour*, ib., XIII, 150.

-or): *hizore*, R. H., I, 245, 15. *lengore*, P. P. a, XI, 138. *depore*, ib., a, XII, 38. *feirore*, ib., a, XI, 171.

-re): *narre*, C. M., 387. *arre*, K. H., 567. *raþre*, Aænbn., 18, 13. *hayre*, R. H., I, 14, 17. *nerre*, ib., I, 221, 4. *worre*, Sir Gaw., 1588. *herre*, ib., 333. *fyrre*, Pearl, 347. *nerre*, ib., 233. *sarre*, Clean., 1195. *derre*, Ch. T., I, 208. *bettre*, ib., H. F., 1214. *nerre*, P. P., c, XX, 62. *derre*, Temp. G., 1448.

¹ Mätzner. *Englische Grammatik*, p. 337. Sweet. *New English Grammar*, sec. 1049.

2. Superlatives :

neist, C. M., 141. *heist*, ib., 439. *lenges*, ib., 26652. *hardest*, ib., 22208. *haleyste*, R. H., II, 438, 29. *slilokestę*, P. P., c, XII, 266.

As has been stated, in the fourteenth century the terminational was the prevailing mode of comparison. The comparative endings *-er*, *-est* or their variants, with or without the adverbial ending *-e*, were added to adverbs almost regardless of their length, due, of course, to the fact that comparison by *more* and *most* did not appear in English until the preceding century.

Examples of the comparative and superlative of adverbs formed by adding *-e* to monosyllabic adjectives are frequent.

1. Comparatives :

faster, C. M., 1457. *sarer*, ib., 14306. *pe hezere*, Ayenb., 44, 15. *hegther*, R. H., I, 43, 15. *suner*, ib., II, 300, 402. *gladder*, ib., II, 119, 14. *titter*, P. C., 2354. *hatter*, Clean., 1188. *wylger*, ib., 375. *yikker*, Patience, 6. *lowere*, Voi. Tr., 218, 14. *oftere*, Wycl., 305, 12. *sonere*, ib., 18, 11. *softere*, P. P., c, XXIII, 310. *sarrer*, ib., c, XVI, 286. *brihtere*, Con. Am., VI, 1525. *closer*, Ch. R. R., 968. *hyer*, ib., T., III, 1422. *downere*, ib., A, II, 12, 22. *hatter*, Temp. G., 362.

2. Superlatives :

heist, C. M., 439. *tittest*, ib., 16049. *hyghest*, R. H., II, 443, 52. *lawest*, P. C., 998. *sarrest*, Clean., 1078. *sorest*, M. P., V, 323. *soonest*, P. P., VII, 392. *oftest*, ib., V, 572.

Adverbs in *-ly* show some interesting forms, as: Southern *-liche*, Midland *-lik*, and Northern *-li*. Manning has the form *-lygh*, *gladlygh*, *Med. Sup.*, 89. Ten Brink¹ gives the following concerning these forms: "Ferner sind ausgenommen die Composita mit *-ly-* (an. adj. *ligr*, adv. *-liga*, vielfach an die Stelle getreten von ae. *-lic*, *-lice*, das in *-lich*, *-liche* fortlebt), in denen *-ly* den Character eines Adverbial-suffixes anzunehmen begonnen hat."

The origin of such forms as *comlaker*, *stranglakest* is not clear. A possible source for *laker*, *lakest* is *layk*, found as a suffix in such words as *hendelayk*, *Troy Book*, 2213, *hendellayk*, *Sir Gaw.*,

¹ *Chaucer's Sprache and Verskunst*, p. 133.

1228, *gryndel-layk*, ib., 312. The following explanations are given by Murray¹: *Hendelaik* (*Hende* + a suffix *laik* = ON. *leikr*. *Hardlaik*, ON. *Hardleikr*). Horstman gives the same explanation for *ferdlayk*.

The difference, if any, in the origin of *-li*, *-liche*, *-lik*, with a possible difference in meaning, was lost sight of and they were leveled to *-ly* in both adjectives and adverbs. Later, *-ly* became a distinctive adverbial ending, being kept in but few adjectives. It is now freely added to adjectives which never ended in *-lic* or its equivalent.

These adverbial endings are occasionally added to the adverb in *-e* or to adjectives without dropping *e*, as: *rathelier*, *worpeloker*. Again we find them used with adjectives in *-y*, the aim being, doubtless, to distinguish between the adjective and the adverb. Barbour's *Bruce* is especially prolific in such forms, some of which are: *hamlyly*, XIII, 194; *halyly*, VIII, 937; *manlyly*, VIII, 886; *foulyly*, VI, 796. The most peculiar form is produced by adding *-ly* to the comparative form in *-er* and comparing this form again instead of comparing the positive *-ly* form.

Beside the normal forms, *-lier*, *-liest*; *-liker*, *-likest*; *-loker*, *-lokest*; *-laker*, *-lakest*, are found. The endings *-laker*, *-lakest* appear only in texts written in the Kentish dialect.

These adverbs take the terminational comparison whether they have two syllables or four.

1. Dissyllables:

wislier, C. M., 28116. *sliliker*, ib., 11231. *smartlier*, ib., 341. *lightlier*, R. H., II, 49, 16. *gladliker*, C. M., 19781. *suiftliker*, ib., 341. *lihtloker*, R. H., II, 437, 41. *freloker*, Clean., 1106. *stranglaker*, Ayenb., 17, 17. *lihtlaker*, ib., 231, 40. *fellaker*, ib., 174, 11. *warloker*, Sir Gaw., 677. *gladloker*, ib., 1064. *wysliere*, Wycl., 41, 34. *sadloker*, P. P., a, V, 4. *wisloker*, ib., b, XIII, 343. *namlikest*, C. M., 14778. *halyest*, R. H., I, 51, 21. *gladlyest*, Voi. Tr., 194, 3. *slilokeste*, P. P., c, XII, 266. *stranglakest*, Ayenb., 157, 26. *sikerest*, Con., A., II, 129.

2. Three or more syllables:

stedfastliker, C. M., 201. *umwysliere*, R. H., II, 324, 18. *hastlier*, ib., I, 391, 33. *inwardloker*, ib., II, 28, 319. *bytterlier*, ib., I, 164,

¹ *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*.

6. *þe unwysliere*, ib., I, 296, 16. *hardylaker*, Ayenb., 60, 10. *wroþeloker*, Sir Gaw., 2344. *sykerloker*, P. P., c, VIII, 142. *reverentloker*, ib., c, IX, 44. *riveliest*, C. M., 7880. *halelyeste*, R. H., I, 51, 22. *wikkedlokest*, P. P., b, X, 427. *ryghtfullokest*, ib., e, XXI, 476.

Present usage demands that *-er*, *-est* be added only to adverbs having no special ending in the positive, especially those having the same form as the adjective, e.g. *hard*, *fast*, *close*. But in the fourteenth century, as the examples demonstrate, the terminational comparison was used freely with adverbs of any length and having various endings.

II. PERIPHRASTIC COMPARISON

As suggested elsewhere, the periphrastic mode of comparison was not found in OE. It occurred first in the thirteenth century, but does not become common until Chaucer's time. The use of *more* and *most* with adverbs arose perhaps from the extension of their use with participles and with adjectives not strictly allowing comparison¹ and first touched adverbs in *-ly*.²

The earlier fourteenth century writers make little use of this mode of comparison. No examples were found in *Cursor Mundi*, *King Horn*, *Floris and Blancheflur*, and *The Assumption of our Lady*. But one example was found in *Meditations on the Supper of Oi Lord*, and but three in the *Bruce*. Mandeville uses this mode of comparison more freely than Barbour. His *Voiage and Travaile* shows its use with such adverbs as *ryghte*, *faste*. In general, the Southern and Midland districts used the periphrastic comparison earlier and more freely than Northern districts.

This mode of comparison is used with adverbs in *-e* as well as with the longer forms.

1. Adverbs in *-e*:

most glade, Med. Sup., 7, 199. *more nere*, R. H., II, 323, 1517. *mar clere*, P. C., 9182. *more clene*, Voi. Tr., 99, 28. *more nyghe*, ib., 99, 19. *more faste*, ib., 305, 1. *more ryghte*, ib., 29, 22. *more hye*, Wycl., 470, 9. *more nye*, ib., 409, 29. *more plein*, Con. Am., IV, 39. *most hyhe*, ib., I, 2361.

¹Skeat. *Principles of English Etymology*, II, p. 331.

²Mätzner. *Englische Grammatik*, p. 398.

2. Adverbs of two or more syllables ending in *-ly*, *-li*, *-liche*, etc.:

more gratliche, Ayenb., 184, 10. *þe more hardyliche*, ib., 60, 5. *more generaliche*, ib., 184, 10. *þe more clerely*, R. H., I, 27, 8. *the more depely*, II, 107, 24. *þe more kunnyngli*, ib., I, 94, 28. *þe more plenteousli*, ib., I, 263, 32. *þe more ryghtfully*, ib., II, 78, 15. *þe more stidfastly*, ib., I, 94, 28. *most honestli*, II, 88, 26. *most wikkedly*, ib., I, 202, 30. *mar bitterly*, P. C., 2988. *mare hastily*, ib., 3725. *mar slawly*, ib., 3197. *more pryuyly*, Clean., 1107. *more traybly*, ib., 1137. *mor folly*, Fifty W., 9, 7. *more pleyntly*, Voi. Tr., 4, 28. *more sikerly*, ib., 34, 4. *mar hartfully*, Bruce, II, 905. *mar encrely*, ib., V, 855. *mar traistly*, ib., XIV, 260. *moste cruelly*, Wycl., 18, 4. *moost witty*, ib., 299, 4. *moost principaly*, ib., 452, 19. *mor hertly*, Con. Am., V, 4177. *most comunly*, ib., II, 2099. *the more unbuxomliche*, ib., VII, 3569. *more deerly*, Ch. B., V, 303. *more largely*, ib., G. 693. *more rightfully*, ib., B. V., p. v, 128, 203. *most plenteously*, ib., G. 686. *most mekeli*, Temp. G., 915. *more plentyfousliche*, Voi. Tr., 187, 17.

The usage of the two modes of the comparison of adverbs in the fourteenth century varies somewhat from that of modern English. The terminational mode was used more widely and more frequently in the fourteenth century than it is at present, since *-er*, *-est* were used freely with adverbs of any length. The periphrastic mode which, if not the prevailing mode in English, is used as freely as the terminational, was just establishing itself in the fourteenth century and had not crowded out, to any great extent, the use of *-er* and *-est* with the longer adverbs. Usually, fourteenth century writers used *the* with the periphrastic mode. This is more especially true of the writers in the early part of the century: *the more depely*, R.H., II, 107, 24. *the more ryghtfully*, ib., I, 78, 15. *Welle þe mar*, C. M., 26745.

III. IRREGULAR COMPARISON

I. FORMS SHOWING UMLAUT

Umlaut comparison, seen in the forms from Teut. **-izan-*, **-ist-* survives in the fourteenth century in the comparative and superlative forms of *long* and *strong*, beside the unumlauted forms.

1. *Lenger*, *lengest*:

for *langer* þan he, C. M., 465. Might þai na *langer* drei, ib., 1782. Might be no *langer* drei, ib., 1300. *lenger* tarye, Med. Sup., 946.

No *lenger* may byde, ib., 1020. *langer* spare, Minot, IV, 16. *lenger* delay, ib., IV, 35. No *lenger* bere it, R. H., I, 209, 9. No *lengare* tarie, ib., I, 210, 38. *langar* lasted, I, 45, 29. Go no *lenger*, Clean., 810. Wold no *lenger* byde, ib., 977. *lenger* than, Voi. Tr., 154, 17. *longer* ben clept, ib., 299, 13. *langer* delaying, Bruce, XIV, 706. *þe lenger* ich lete *þe* go, P. P., c, IV, 135. Ich may no *langer* lette, ib., XX, 365. *þe lengere* hē spareth, Wycl., 266, 18. Dwellith *lengest*, ib., 18, 8. This thing no *lengere* is delaide, Con. Am., II, 1434. No *lenger* wolde be kepte, Ch. R. R., 1333. No *lengere* doon it, ib., T., III, 987. tarry *langer*, ib., M. P., V, 657. I *lengir* dwel, Temp. G., 1271. No *lenger* be contuned, ib., 390.

The unmlauted forms of *long* prevail in the Midland and Southern dialects, the unumlauted in the North. The *Bruce* has no unumlauted form, *Med. Sup.* no unumlauted form. The only example of Modern English forms was found in Mandeville's *Voiage and Travaile*, and the manuscript of this is from a later period.

2. *Strenger*:

more *strenger* to done, Ayenb., 170, 20. *Strenger* and *strengest* were found as adjectives in C. M., Ayenb., Con. Am., P. P., but no examples of them as adverbs.

As previously explained, Teutonic adverbs which are compared by adding **-is*, **-ist* to the positive give OE. monosyllabic comparatives. The different forms are treated later when these adverbs are taken up more specifically.

less, C. M., 1747. *leng*, K. H., 1183. *leng*, R. H., I, 33, 780. *wers*, Clean., 80. *ner*, Bruce, III, 72. *bet*, P. P., IX, 42. *nerr* Minot, P., X, 15. *ferr*, ib., X, 16. *let*, Con. Am., I, 1976. *wors*, Ch., D., 171. For *ma*, see below.

2. COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES WITH CONSONANT DOUBLING

Old English has many cases of gemination of *t*, *c*, *p*, *h*, before *l* and *r*. This doubling of the consonants before *r* of the comparative is very common, especially in LWS.¹ Hence the comparative often shows consonant doubling not justified by the positive. Later, for words with long vowels, the doubling of the

¹Sweet. *History of English Sounds*, sec. 410.

consonant caused vowel shortening in the comparative and superlative.¹ Such forms are very common in the fourteenth century and are found in all dialects.

þe sonner, C. M., 4400. *þe gretter*, ib., 28807. *tittest*, ib., 16049. *sonnest*, ib., 15833. *derrer*, Ayenb., 36, 22. *swettere*, P. C., 2354. *þe clennar*, R. H., I, 68, 38. *deppir*, ib., 96, 13. *luddere*, ib., 331, 19. *sonnest*, ib., 187, 28. *þe gretter*, ib., 384, 40. *clanner*, Clean., 1100. *derrest*, ib., 1108. *sunner*, Voi. Tr., 214, 8. *sarrer*, P. P., a, I, 171. *sarrer*, ib., c, XVI, 286. *wydder*, ib., c, XXI, 403. *deppest*, Wycl., 206, 32. *depper*, Ch. T., II, 485. *derre*, ib., T., I, 374. *uppere*, ib., A, ii, 12, 21.

Modern English *latter*, *upper*, *utter* are examples retaining this consonant doubling, but in most cases it was lost through analogy with the positive.

3. ADVERBS WITH COMPARATIVES BUILT FROM MORE THAN ONE STEM

Adverbs with comparatives built from more than one stem are OE. *wel*, *yfel*, *micel*, *lytel*. These adverbs properly belong with the umlauted forms, since they always take the Teut. endings **-izan-*, **-ist-* which cause umlaut of the root vowel. *Ma*, from **mais* is an exception, since in this *ai* is treated as a diphthong.

a. *Wel*, *better*, *best*

The OE. comparative and superlative forms for *wel* are *bet* (Goth. *batis*), and *betst* (Goth. *batist*) from the Teut. stem **bat*. *Betst*, which comes from *batist* by syncopation of the middle vowel,² developed into *best* either by analogy with *last* and *most* or by assimilation of *-t-* to *-s-*. The ending of the comparative *batis* is lost in OE., as previously explained, giving OE. *bet*, which becomes *better* by analogy with adjectives.

The ME. variants are: *betere*, *bettere*, *betre*, *bette*, *bet*, *beter*, *bettur*, *bettir*, *bett*, *bettre*; *beste*.

¹Sweet. *History of English Sound*, sec. 632.

²Mätzner. *Englische Grammatik*, p. 88.

As it be *betre* (*bett*, *bet*) þat þou has wroght, C. M., 946. Wel *bet-tur* have made, ib., 850. Ete and drynke *better*, R. H., I, 27, 22. Is *betere* et, Avenb., 102, 6. Set *bēt*, ib., 199, 5. To love þe *betere*, R. H., I, 74, 28. Bronde *bet*, Clean., 1012. Ga we furth till him *bettir* speide, Bruce, III, 735. And defend thaim *bettre*, ib., XIV, 262. bote þe *betere*, P. P., c., V, 89. wrohtest þow neuere *bettere*, ib., c., IV, 137. Myht *bet* mete, ib., c., I, 163. þei willen no *betere*, ib., c., II, 8. Kenne me *bettere*, ib., c., II, 137. þe *bette* may you speide, ib., XV, 601. He can do *bet*, ib., XV, 10. To leue the *betre*, Wycl., 3, 21. To be *betre* occupied, ib., 126, 24. Tō lyve *beter*, ib., 289, 15. Shulde *beste* knowe, ib., 48, 8. There is no cloth sitteth *bet*, Ch. R. R., 1239. Wel *beter* woxen were, ib., 1676. To avyse hir *bettre*, ib., T., II, 1214. *Beter* at ese, ib., 1099. Loved him *beste*, ib., D., 513. Fare þe *bette*, Temp. G., 1063. þe *bettir* speide, ib., 1064.

Bet is used in the sense of 'quickly' or 'faster' in the following: Go *bet*, Ch. C., II, 7. Go *bet*, ib., M. P., III, 136.

Better and its variants are sometimes emphasized by repetition: *bet* and *bēt*, Ch. T., III, 714; or by adverbial intensives: *ful bet*, Ch. R. R., 6001. *wel bet*, ib., T., III, 126. *wel the betre*, Con. Am., II, 3523.

b. *Evil* (*ill*), *worse*, *worst*

OE. *yfel*, ME. *vuel* is probably Northumbrian.¹ A new positive, *ill*, from Scandinavian *illr*, came into use beside *evil* in ME. *Wers*, like *bet*, is a monosyllabic comparative from Teut. **wiriz* (Goth. *wairs*). OE. *wierrest*, *wierst* (Teut. **wierzist*) gives Modern English *worst* through the influence of *w* and *r*.

Variants for the comparative and superlative are: *wa*, *war*, *ware*, *warr*, *wer*, *wers*, *werr*, *werre*, *werse*, *worre*, *worse*; *werst*, *werste*. The Northern *a* forms, *war*, *warre*, correspond to ON. *verri*.² OE. *-s* in *wers* becomes *r* through assimilation, giving the forms in double *r*. In *worsse*, *-se* represents *-re*, making the form a double comparative. The vowel *-o-* is the result of labialization through *w*.³

¹ Luick. *Untersuchungen zur englischen Lautgeschichte*, secs. 534, 600.

² Sweet. *New English Grammar*, sec. 1050.

³ *Ibid.*, sec. 1050.

1. Positives:

Evil: *Evil* is þe quit þe true servyse, C. M., 4222. Him *euele* þonkep, Ayenb., 68, 20. Wer *euel* don, Pearl, 929. doþ *vuele*, P. P., c, XI, 26. þei suffered *vuele*, ib., XIV, 115. lyueth *euele*, Wycl., 57, 2. Ben *yuel* dispendid, ib., 285, 33. Ben *yuel* distryed, ib., 285, 35. Fare neuere so *euele*, ib., 300, 26. The men were *euele* apaied, Con. Am., V, 146. which is *euele* affaited, ib., IV, 3266. Ful *euel* rehersen, Ch. M. P., III, 1204. He ferde thus *euel*, ib., III, 507.

Ill: *Ill* is þe quit þe god servius, C. M., 4222. Worche þei wolle *ylle*, P. P., c, IX, 211. Bold to don *ille*, ib., a, IX, 93. Bi suchē þat don *ille*, ib., b, X, 26.

No examples were found of *ill* used adverbially in the early part of the century.

2. Comparatives:

þe *wars* (*werre*, *wer*) warrist er we, C. M., 21884. sal be well *war*, ib., 22476. I wrought þe *wers*, ib., 28357. Wele *war* (*werre*), ib., 1360. þou has done *wers*, R. H., I, 145, 19. Ete and drynk better and *war* (*ware*), ib., I, 27, 22. Burne þe *wers*, Clean., 80. Felle þe *worre*, Sir Gaw., 1591. He mysdyd but *wer*, Bruce, I, 673. *Worse* wroughtest þow neuere, P. P., c, IV, 137. Bote þe *werse*, ib., c, VII, 382. Don welle *werse*, ib., XVII, 30. He never haþ himself þe *werse*, Con. Am., III, 1646. ferde *worse*, Ch. M. P., III, 99. I coude clepe *wers*, ib., III, 814. Do we no *werse*, ib., T., IV, 1194. shal savour *wors* than ale, ib., D, 171.

3. Superlatives:

þe *werst* luue, C. M., 4386. wrotytn *werste*, Med. Sup, 730. Make *werst*, Ayenb., 46, 20. *Worste* ferde, Con. Am., 181, 34.

Many of these variants occur frequently in the following century.

One example of double comparison was found: Hi byep *more worse*, Ayenb., 64, 28. Some examples of the use of adverbial intensives are: *wel war*, C. M., 28757. *welle werse*, P. P., 18, 30. A few examples of *badd*, *badde*, *badder* as adjectives, and the adverbs *baddely*, *baddeliche* were found, but no examples of *bad* used adverbially.

c. *Much*, *more*, *most*

The comparative and superlative forms of *much* (OE. *micel*, Scand. *mjök*) are built upon the Teut. stem **ma*. Teut. **mais-* (OE. *ma*) gives ME. *mo*, a monosyllabic comparative. The forms

in *-re* are the result of analogy and are really double comparatives. Teut. **maist* (OE. *mæst*, *mast*, ME. *mast*, *mest*, *mōst*) gives Modern English *most*.

Variants for the three forms of comparison are: *mykel*, *mikel*, *mykelle*, *mekil*, *mukel*, *mochel*, *mochil*, *mychel*, *moche*, *meche*, *mechel*; *mo*, *ma*, *moo*, *mar*, *mor*, *mare*, *moore*; *mast*, *maste*, *maaste*, *moste*, *moost*, *meste*, *meest*. Northern forms have *-a-* and *-k-*, Southern forms, *-o-* and *-ch-* as: *maast*, *moost*; *mykel*, *mychel*.

1. Positives:

mikil mare, C. M., 451. *mikel*, ib., 3480. *wel muchel*, K. H., 994. *moche more*, Med. Sup., 782. *Mochel* he louede, Ayenb., I, 33, 13. Luf als *mykelle*; P. C., 8396. *mekill* lesse, R. H., I, 288, 14. so *mekill more*, ib., I, 165, 19. *muchel more*, ib., II, 365, 15. so *muchel* monyfold, ib., 365, 16. *neuer so moche*, ib., I, 108, 6. *þe mukel*, Clean., 52. As *moche* do, P. P., c, IV., 182. Hou *mychel more*, Wycl., 42, 32. as *mochil* as, ib., 121, 29. als *moche* as, ib., 121, 26.

2. Comparatives:

Ma þan a thusand selers, C. M., 4686. *Welle* þe *mar*, ib., 26745. *nreumor*, Ayenb., 238, 12. *neuremor*, ib., 238, 12. Greves *mare*, P. C., 3153. ever *mar*, ib., 2851. *þe mor* man dredes, R. H., I, 164, 5. *moche moore*, ib., I, 451, 28. *saued* bes he *neuer-moo*, ib., 1126, 126. For-gos þe *mo*, Pearl, 340. Had *ma* richty gert his sepultur, Bruce, XIV, 1184, Herkyn *mar*, ib., IV, 745. and a quhile tharin sorouw *ma*, ib., 685. Many *mo* orible conclusions, Wycl., 130, 28. *Mo* þan needful, ib., 173, 14. Never-*mo*, Ch. T., I, 675. For ever-*mor*, ib., T., II, 1301.

3. Superlatives:

þat *mast* lufes god, C. M., 28. He þat was *mast* furgiven, ib., 19048. þai ras in Jerusalem alther*mast*, ib., 19480. *Moost* is it wrought for frankis man, ib., 229. *suffre mest*, Med. Sup., 400. *þe meste* beloued, Ayenb., 104, 27. *maast* traystes, R. R., I, 28, 24. *moste*, ib., II, 417, 8. *mōst* noyē, Wycl., 307, 32. *moost* loven, Ch. D., 984.

Some of these examples illustrate the use of *wel* and *much* as intensives with *more*.

d. Little, less, least

Little (OE. *lytel*) has a comparative and superlative formed from Teut. **lais*, **laiz*. Like *bet* and *ma*, *less* (OE. *læs*) is a

monosyllabic comparative, which by analogy becomes *læsre*. This form *læsre* becomes OE. *læssa* since OE. *-sr* from Teut. *-sz-* becomes *-ss* by assimilation; hence ME. *lasse*, *lesse*. Modern English *lesser* is a double comparative built upon the old comparative *less*. *Least* (OE. *læsest*, *lærest*) becomes *least* by syncope of the vowel of the ending.

Variants are: *lytel*, *litel*, *lyttel*, *lutel*, *littel*; *les*, *lese*, *lease*, *lees*, *las*, *lass*, *lasse*; *lest*, *leste*, *leeste*, *leist*.

1. Positives:

But *littil* (*lytil*, *littel*), C. M., 18236. *litel* ybore, Ayenb., 20, 18. *litel* wene, K. H., 1155. He caht up a *lyttel*, Sir Gaw., 1185. a *lyttel* more, Clean., 736. A *lutel* be-hynde, St. of Rome, 181. *littel* good, Wycl., 12, 34.

2. Comparatives:

was þar na liif in *less* ne mare, C. M., 1322. Fell þai depe, or *lesse* or mare, ib., 492. neiper more ne *lasse*, K. H., 855. pray-zest *lesse*, Ayenb., 20, 16. Greves *les*, P. C., 3153. neuer-þe-*les*, Pearl, 864. neuer-þe-*lese*, ib., 912. neuer-þe-*lasse*, Clean., 215. neuer-þe-*les*, P. P., I, 62. *nepeles*, Wycl., 42, 3. *lesse*, ib., 157, 24. neuer-þe-*lees*, ib., 297, 17. *las*, Ch. M. P., III, 675.

3. Superlatives:

At *leist*, C. M., 6774. Or at þe *last* to hald him still, ib., 2235. Man agh *lest* do dishonur, ib., 27201. At þe *leste*, R. H., I, 28, 654. þe *lest* venial synnes, P. C., 2434. Hi bye *lest* worþ, Ayenb., 36, 19. zelle by þe *leste*, ib., 44, 20. yut *leest* þyn oweþe, P. P., c, IV, 210. When thy *lest* menden, XIII, 27. *Leste* yvel, Wycl., 233, 33. *Leest* worþ, ib., 468, 19. *lest* conquere, Con. Am., III, 1649. Recche *leest*, Ch. T, II, 1151. Lovest *lest*, ib., T, II, 1396. *least* coulede desire, ib., T, III, 1652.

4. DOUBLE COMPARISON OF *late*, *near*, *far*

a. *Late*

Late (OE. *late*, 'slowly') has two forms for the comparative and superlative. The older forms are *latter* (OE. *lator*) and *last* (OE. *latost*). In *latter*, the doubling of *-t-* is due to *-r* of the comparative, as previously explained. *Last* developed from *latost* by syncopation or by analogy with *best*,¹ or by assimilation of *-t-*. When *latter* and *last* developed special meanings, new forms,

¹ Sweet. *History of English Sounds*, sec. 692.

later and *latest*, were formed from the positive *late* in the regular way. Modern English has both forms of comparison, doubtless because of the difference in meaning which has enabled the forms to resist the leveling influence of analogy. No example of *latest* was found.

1. *Latter*:

so mikel þe *latter* sal we gif, R. H., I, 419, 45. neuer-þe-*'atter* ib., I, 17, 15. neuer-þe-*latter*, P. C., 3640. neuer-þe-*lattere*, R. H., I, 28, 166. The *latter* aryseth, Ch. I, 971.

2. *Last*:

How he wroght *last*, C. M., 12764. ete at þe *last*, ib., 1023. At þe *last* to hold him stil, ib., 22, 75. At þe *laste* she consented, Med. Sup., 953. Bot at þe *last* rifild, Minot, P., II, 16. ate *laste* he is zetnesse, Ayenb., 104, 8. Bi þe *laste*, R. H., I, 28, 654. Swa sal he at þe *last* mak endyng, P. C., 34. At þe *laste* þo ledes fayled þe fode, Clean., 1193. þay flokked at þe *laste*. Sir G., 1323. Til ate *laste* arrived Con. Am., 702. At þe *laste* awakeden, P. P., c, XV, 273. But then it ceased atte *last*, ib., VIII, 17. Lenged at þe *last*, Patience, 281. þey turnyden at þe *laste*, Wycl., 469, 5. Lese hir travel at the *last*, Ch. R. R., 4452.

3. *Later*:

Come no *latere*, K. H., 1096. *later* after receyuyng þo holy gost, R. H., I, 49, 28. þat ladis wer, neuer þe *later*, Clean., 1352. þe *latere* for to dele, P. P., a, I, 175.

b. *Near*

Near shows an interesting comparative development. The oldest comparison is *nigh* (OE. *neah*), *near* (OE. *near*), *next* (OE. *neahst*, *niehst*, *next*). **Neahest* develops into *next* by palatal umlaut.¹ The positive *nigh* of the old comparison developed the forms *nigher*, *nighest*. The old comparative *near* took on a positive meaning through analogy with *there* and *here*,² upon which the comparative *nearer*, superlative *nearest* were built.

Variants for *nigh* are: *nye*, *ney*, *neh*, *nehe*, *negh*, *nyg*, *nyghe*, *ny*, *nygh*, *nier*; *nere*, *ner*, *neer*, *nerr*; *neiest*, *neist*, *neghst*, *nest*, *nestes*, *nexst*, *nexist*, *nexest*, *nexte*.

¹ Sievers. *Altenglische Grammatik*, sec. 166, 5.

² Sweet. *New English Grammar*, sec. 1048.

1. *Nigh*, which in present English is dialectal, is very common in ME., being used by the best writers. Its most common use is in the sense of 'almost,' to denote time, place, and degree. Some examples of its use in the meaning of 'near in place' were found.

1. *Nigh* (*near*):

If we com þer *nei*, C. M., 767. In hir hert *ney* wald sco wede, ib., 18034. He cumþ *ny*, Med. Sup., 418. I worne you but on nyht *neghe* me to lenge, Pearl, 803. Til hit waht *nyhe* at þe naht, Sea. Voy., 40. Cam *nyh* ther, Con. Am., I, 1527. Toucheth me right *ny*, Ch. B, 27, 35. I am shave as *nye* as any frere, ib., M. P., 19, 19. His berd was shave as *ny* as ever he can, ib., A, 590.

2. *Nigh* (*almost*):

þe worlde ys *nye* begyled, Ayenb., 76, 19. Wel *neh*, Pearl, 528. May *ney* as moche do, P. P., c, IV, 182. Makest hem wel *ney* meek, ib., c, XVI, 294. Wel *nye* paradys mot preue no better, Clean., 704. Wel *ny* alle othere cures, Ch. E., 82. And *negh* hir face was alderbest, ib., M. P., 3, 507. assegeden *neigh* ten yeer, ib., T., I, 160. That *ny* her sorweful herte brak, ib., L., 2347.

In the following, *nigh* is used in the sense of *very*: Wulde *nyghe* ful sone, Med. Sup., 886.

3. *Nigher* and *nighest*:

Berwild gan him *nier* rede, C. M., 35, 829. þet more byeþ *nier* god, Ayenb., 234, 35. to another *neghest* folowand, P. C., 2685.

4. *Near* as comparative is, like *bet* and *less*, a monosyllabic comparative:

Brought þvs blys *ner*, Pearl, 286. I aproche hit no *nerre*, Patience, 85. Draygh *ner* and *ner*, Bruce, III, 72. Na *ner*, ib., III, 66. Neode nehede þo *ner*, P. P., c, XXIII, 232. Neode neyhede þo *ner*, ib., c, XXIII, 232. Neghed þam *nerr*, Minot, P. X., 15. *Neer* to Crist, Wycl., 289, 22. Thei hem drowen *nerr* and *nerr*, Con. Am., III, 1040. Bot thêrof was sche noght the *ner*, ib., II, 2286. She drogh ay *neer* and *neer*, Ch. A, 434. This day fifty wykes fer ne *ner* everich of yow shal bringe an hundred knights, ib., A, 1850. Never the *neer*, ib., G., 721. My bote is never the *neere*, ib., M. P., III, 38. Be we never the *neere*, ib., V, 619. Euer *neere* and *neere* as I gan neigh, Temp. G., 22.

2. *Next* is from OE. *neahest* which by palatal umlaut and syn-copation, gives *nehst*, written *next*. This form by loss of *-h-* and compensatory lengthening becomes Northern *nest*, *neist*.¹ In

¹Sievers. *Altenglische Grammatik*, sec. 313.

Modern English *next* has become isolated from the other forms and developed the special meaning of sequence. In ME. it is used to denote sequence, place, and time, as it was still felt to be connected with *nigh* and *near*.

1. *Next* denoting place:

þat þe siteth *nixte*, C. M., 18409. þat lay þaim *neist* til hand, ib., 2446. His fall is *next* his hand, ib., 62. þat is *nest* god, R. H., I, 415, 22. ye lye *nexte*, Sir Gaw., 1780. He set *next*, Flor. and Bl., 448. *Nest* he hath of foure upon his brest, Con. Am., VII, 1075.

2. *Next* denoting time and sequence:

þar *neist* sal be met, C. M., 141. And for to tell þer *neist*, ib., 26078. þe *neist* formast questiu, ib., 26877. Sum-quat es to sai her *nest*, ib., 27148. To rekken *nestes*, ib., 26345. I sal þe tell here *nexist*, ib., 26138. Here *nexst* i sal þe neuen, ib., 29434. To quam tell *nexist*, ib., 26138. Lyued *nxt* after, Clean., 261. Ad *nexst* Crist, Wycl., 457, 10.

3. Variants of *near* are: *nere*, *neer*, *ner*; *nerre*, *narre*, *nerrer*, *nearer*; *nerrest*, *nerest*. Of these, the *-a-* forms are Northern. As previously explained, *-re* is the OE. comparative ending.

1. *Near*, *nearer*, *nearest*:

Ded es *nere*, P. C., 815. Wel *ner*, Clean., 1585. þat wonez hym *nere*, Pearl, 404, draghus to foly *nere*, C. M., 28. I am aliche *nerr*, Con. Am., III, 1147. But were he fer or *neer*, Ch. T., I, 451. That Theseus hath taken him so *neer*, ib., A., 1439. þat sittes wel *ner*, Clean., 1585. als þai come *narre*, C. M., 3870. þe *nerrer* he wenys, R. H., I, 105, 24. Mai I negh þe *nere*, ib., I, 58, 8. þe *nerre* may come, ib., I, 176, 6. þe *qerrer* þat þai sal hym be, P. C., 9238. Com þe kyng *nerre*, Sir Gaw., 556. Come *nerrer*, Voi. Tr., 20, 24. And raid *nerar* to giddy than er did thai, Bruce, XI, 388. Not an inch the *nerre*, Ch. R. R., II, 5101. *Nerest* (*nerrest*) god, R. H., I, 29, 34. When þai com þar sal be hym *nerrest*, P. C., 9237.

2. Double comparison:

more nere, R. H., II, 22, 32.

3. Periphrastic comparison:

more nyghe, Voi. Tr., 271, 22. A half *more nyghe*, ib., 99, 18. May do oþer *more nygh*, Wycl., 409, 32. *mest nye* diuol, Ayenb., 36, 17.

c. *Far*

Far shows contamination of the comparative forms of OE. *feor* and *fore*. The forms of *far* (OE. *feor*) were *fierr*, *fierrest*,

and of *fore*, *furþor*, *fyrst*. *Fyrst*, like *next*, became isolated from the other comparative forms and took on the meaning of the OE. superlative *forma*. By analogy, a new superlative *furþest* was formed from *furþor*. Again, the monosyllabic comparative, *fierr*, was confused with the comparative *feor*, owing to the tendency to do away with umlaut,¹ and the comparative *ferre* was formed. ME. shows the two comparative forms *ferre* and *furþor* for *fer*, the former being displaced by the latter in Modern English. Finally, *far* (ME. *fer*) extended its vowel to the other forms, giving *far*, *farther*, *farthest*.

The indiscriminate use of *-d-* and *-th-* is peculiar to ME., in which *-d-* had a tendency to become *-þ-* when preceded by a vowel and followed by *-r-*.²

Variants are: *ferre*, *fer*, *feor*, *feir*, *ferr*, *farr*; *ferrer*, *fyrre*, *firre*, *ferre*, *ferr*, *ferrere*, *ferþer*, *ferþere*, *forþer*, *forþar*, *forthir*, *farrer*, *ferthere*; *ferrest*, *furþest*, *fyrst*, *furst*, *feirst*, *furste*.

1. Positives:

Cam ful *fer* (*ferre*, *fer*) C. M., 1206. Als *ferre* als hi may reche, ib., 17332. Sa *feir* i can, ib., 16386. *Feor* icome, K. H., 1215. How *farr* into hell pitte, ib., 506. Hadde ben *ferre* and wyde, Flor. & Bl., 447. How *fer*, Pearl, 334. *Ferre* fra, P. C., 197. als *fer* als it reches, ib., 3895. Nat fleo *fer*, P. P., XV, 177. She gan so *fer* espye, Ch. B., 1381.

Fer and its monosyllabic variants prevail, though the confusion of the positive and the comparative is quite general and common.

2. Comparatives:

He (*forþor*, *furþer*) *ferder* soght, C. M., 14107. Suld *fer* *erþer*, *furþer*) spredd, ib., 17510. No *farrer* may þou wyn, ib., 990, 396. þe *ferrer* he is, R., I, 105, 24. þat may no man tempte *fer-rer* forthe, P. C., 2382. Er we *fyrre* passe, Sir Gaw., 378. yet *firre* quad þe freke, ib., 1105. Ga we *forther*-mar, P. C., 928. Syled *fyrre*, Clean., 131. þe *fyrre* I folwed, Pearl, 127. Procede *ferthere*, Voi. Tr., 52, 18. *Ffer* might noght flit, Minot, P., X, 18. *Fer* might þai noght fle, ib., V, 52. Er þou passe *forþere*, P. P., XXIII, 338. Bade me telle hit *forthere*, P. P., IX, 72. *Feiroke* vndurfonge, ib.,

¹ Sweet. *New English Grammar*, sec. 1047.

² Sweet. *History of English Sounds*, sec. 251.

a, XI, 171. And yet I forget *ferbere*, ib., *a*, XI, 285. Might þai no *ferr*, Ch, X, 16. Sue Crist neer or *ferrere*, Wycl., 409, 29. Hadde he riden no man *ferre*, Ch. A., 48. We *ferrer* twinne, ib., A., 835. I can no *ferther* fleen, ib., M. P., I, 148. And ay the *forther* that she was in age, ib., E., 712. Can no *ferþer*, Temp. G., 958. *Ferthere* hath Complaynt, 174.

The Midland writers used the OE. comparative almost entirely in the early part of the century. *Ferrer* and *furþor* occur with about the same frequency in the North. Chaucer shows a decided preference for *furþor* and its variants.

3. Superlatives:

Lyueþ *ferrest* fro crist, Wycl., 457, 17. He is *furpest* from hevene, Con. Am., 137, 36. *Farthest* from, Ch. B., IV, P., iv, 144. At himself *first* i sette mi mere, C. M., 131. *Fyrst* hym loued, Med. Sup., 189. Mette *fyrst*, Sir Gaw., 2373. Were *fyrst* blest, Clean., 1718. Hat Arthur on *fyrst*, Sir Gaw., 491. *Ferst* of alle, P. P., II, 110. Art *ferst* our fader, ib., XVIII, 144. þat cam at þe *furst*, ib., III, 120.

Fyrst and *foremost* occurred often in the same sentence, being used for emphasis, as at present. For ich *formest* and *ferst* to fader and to moder haue ybe vnboxome, P. P., c., VII, 15. *Furst* and *foremost* sholde ferme, ib., XXII, 12.

5. DEFECTIVE COMPARISON OF *former*

Former and *foremost* have no positive. *Former* was built from the superlative *forma* (Goth. *fruma*) after *fyrst* had taken on the meaning of *forma*. *Foremost* has been developed from OE. *fyrmost* (Goth. *frumist*). The vowel in *fore* and *forma* displaced the umlauted vowel of the superlative. Other adverbs which formed their superlative by an *m-* suffix, later added *-est*, giving the double superlative ending, OE. *-mæst*, *-mest* (Goth. *-mist*). This double superlative suffix became confused with *most*.¹

1. Positive and comparative: The old superlative *forma* occurs very frequently as an adjective in such expressions as *forme-fader*:

¹Sweet. *New English Grammar*, sec. 1045.

Form -fader, Pearl, 689. *forme* worde, Sir. Gaw., 2373. *Former* was not found as an adverb. Hit are fettled in on *forma*, þe *forme* and þe laste, Patience, 38. þat falle *forma* in þe yer, Pearl, 698.

2. Superlatives:

Foremast chosun, C. M., 20865. And founded hem *formest*, P. P., b, X, 215. Ich vnderfenge *fermest*, ib., VIII, 871.

IV. DOUBLE AND INTENSIFIED COMPARISON

I. DOUBLE COMPARISON

Use of *more* and *most* with the terminational comparatives

The indiscriminate use of the periphrastic mode when first introduced into English and the instinct to intensify or emphasize gave rise to double comparison. As would be expected, this occurs most frequently with words of more than one syllable, being found but once with monosyllables. Double comparison is not as common in this century as it becomes a little later, and is used very little with superlatives.

þe *more pryvely*, R. H., I, 21, 13. þe *more hastly*, ib., II, 391, 23. þe *more zornellaker*, Ayenb., 58, 23. yern *more zuypere*, ib., 61, 17. Hi byeþ *more worse*, ib., 64, 28. *more tleþelaker*, ib., 69, 13. *more zikerlaker*, ib., 195, 5. *More strenger*, to done, ib., 170, 20. *More forthere*, Voi. Tr., 180, 27. Sege *more lowere*, ib., 217, 29. *more forthere*, ib., 206, 14. *more furbere*, Fifty W., 9, 6. *most saunest*, P. P., c, XIII, 223.

2. INTENSIFIED COMPARISON

The comparison of adverbs was frequently strengthened by the adverbs *wel*, *much*, *full* for the comparative, and the prefix *alder-* (OE. *ealra*) for the superlative.

1. Comparatives:

Full þe *mare*, C. M., 28392. *Wel* *strangleker*, Ayenb., 58, 28. *moche more sharpely*, R. H., II, 119, 19. *so mykel þo more perelously*, ib., II, 46, 20. *so mykel mare mekly*, ib., I, 53, 57. *mekyl soner*, ib., I, 10540. Tourned *wel clanner*, Clean., 1100. *wel bryhter*, 1132. *wel hatter*, to hate, ib., 1138. Hert hem *wel sarre*, ib., 1195. Men that war *fer hardar* stad, Bruce, II, 599. *wel sykerour* he slepeþ, P. P., c, XIII, 150. *Much hardyloker* may be aske, ib., c, XVII, 103. *Wole sonere*, Wycl., 240, 17. Envie *wel the more*, Con. Am., II, 351, 2. *Wel lever*, Ch. R. R., 6793.

2. Superlatives:

And to speke i *alpermast*, C. M., 251. *alperlast* i schal tellen, ib., 338. at *alpernest* be found, ib., 49999. þai ras in Jerusalem *althermast*, ib., 19480. þe fouxules *alpernest* be, ib., 1692. Answered *alperfirst*, Flor. & Bl., 696. Vor *alperuerst* he becomþ, Ayenb., 51, 14. *altherbest* have rad, Con. Am., IV, 571. Greve *altherwerst*, ib., 326. Men helpe it *althermost*, ib., I, 3102. *Alderfirst* I wol you seyn, Ch. R. R., 1000. *Aldernext*, ib., M. P., V, 244. And *alderlast* was peynted, ib., R. R., 449. *Alder-lest* avayleth, ib., T., I, 604. Erren *aldermost*, ib., T., I, 1003. *Altherfastest* wente, ib., H. F., 2131. *alderfirste* I loved, ib., L, 2635. *alderbe t* he song, ib., A., 710. And *aldernext* was þe fressh quene, Temp. G., 70. But *alderlast* as I walk, ib., 247.

APPENDIX

COMPARISON OF *rathe*, *ar*, *leve*

Rathe, *ar*, and *leve*, defective in Modern English, show the three comparative forms in Middle English.

a. *Rathe*

Rathe (OE. *hrape*), the positive and superlative of which are now obsolete, shows a not infrequent use of the three comparative forms in ME.

1. Positives:

To *rape* arysenge, Ayenb., 18, 13. Both late and *rape*, P. P., XI, 735. It seete upon the vox deliverliche and *rathe*, Ch. T., iii, 1088. They quitte him out to *rathe*, ib., T., III, 205. Why ryse so *rathe*, ib., A., 3768.

2. Comparatives:

Rape him werrep, Ayenb., 52, 16. Might *rather* help, R. H., II, 389, 37. The *rather* he do, Minot P., III, 868. A robber *raþer* þan þai alle, P. P., XII, 241. Ich sholde *raþere* sterve, ib., II, 144. The lyf shal *rather* out of my body, Ch. B., 335. Conge me *rather*, P. P., c, V, 4.

3. Superlatives:

Repentyde *raþest*, P. P., c, VII, 392. *Rathest* be welked, ib., XXII, 350. Is *rathest* herd. Con. Am., III, 2121.

b. *Ar* (*are*, *ore*)

The ME. spelling for the positive of Modern English *ere* is *ar(e)* or *or(e)* which partly represent ON. *ar* (or an unrecorded OE. *ar* without umlaut) and partly arises from *ær* through loss of stress. This form is used as a positive in OE. (LWS.). Middle English forms in *o* descend directly from ON. *ar*, (OE. *ar*). After the fifteenth century, only Scand. forms, *air*, *ear* (as in *early*) are found. Old English *ær* (ME. *ar*, *er*) corresponds to Prim. Teut. **airiz*, comparative degree of **air*. Teutonic **airist*, OE. *ærest* became *ærst* by syncopation.¹

1. *Ar* as positive and comparative:

Are and late i will zu mon, C. M., 25419. þah he logh but neuer *are*, ib., 1402. (Trin.) Ze wondir an þat i seide *ore*, ib., 2147. Bot arli *ar* men well moight see, ib., 2817. Als I tald *ar* þat kyng of craft, ib., 511. þe jugement a little *are*, ib., 22449. Edúard the bruce as I said *air* was descumfit, Bruce, XVIII, 211. Becom clerer þen *are*, Clean., 1128. Long time *er* we were bore, P. P., II, 2147. *Ar* þou eft entie, ib., XVIII, 267.

2. Superlatives:

Arst in þe Maister þan in þe man, ib., XIV, 216. *Arst* wil I wite no more, ib., IV, 104.

c. *Leve* (*lief*)

The comparative and superlative of *lief* (OE. *leof*, Goth. *liufs*) have dropped out of literary English, *rather* being substituted for the comparative in the sixteenth century. The positive is found in such expressions as "had as lief," "would as lief." Middle English shows the three degrees, though the positive occurs much oftener as an adjective than as an adverb.

1. Positive:

Ful *leue* me was to coum in cri, C. M., 25454. Where þe *leue* liketh, P. P., b, III, 18. Hadde as *lief*, Ch. D., 1574. Hap as *leue* to be a confessour, Wycl., 333, 26.

2. Comparative:

And *lever* dwell, C. M., 24520. And *lever* was sipen to lenger in hell, ib., 1141. þet he hedden *luere* lyese vour messen, Ayenb., 31, 29. But hit ar ladyes in-nowe þat *leuer* wer nowþe, Sir Gaw., 1251,

¹Murray. *New English Dictionary*.

But *levere* sche wolde have wist, Con. Am., IV, 1337. For him was *lever* have at his beddes heed, Ch, A., 293.

3. Superlatives:

As *l uest* him þoght, Sir Gaw., 49. All wommen *liev st* wolde be sovereign of mannes love, Con. Am., I, 1608.

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